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had many "hair-breadth 'scapes;" he has often been "taken by the insolent foe," and put in bondage. I could tell you of his "redemption thence, and with it all his travel's history," but time prevents, and you would think the narrative somewhat tedious. In the mean time, you will be ready to ask, what became of his wife all the while? She returned to her father's house, and while his property was rapidly sinking into the vortex of infamy, she, by care and industry, was providing for herself and infant son, without being a burden to her friends. His fortune destroyed, his character lost, he returned to his native country, for he did not think it *expedient* to remain longer where he was, and from the temple of the Cyprian Goddess, he has made his way into the holy tabernacle of the reverend Cossacs. Here, with all the energy of an apostle, does he daily labour for the conversion of the wicked, and the comfort of the righteous. I myself had the curiosity to attend one of their assemblies at which he held forth; he possesses a clear voice, a popular eloquence, and before he had finished, we had a concert of sighs and groans, little inferior to the bewitching music of bull frogs in the marshes of America. This good old gentlewoman was captivated, her house is become his home, and he has converted it into a conventicle." My friend was interrupted by the arrival of a third person; and as we joined the rest of the party, he said with a sarcastic grin, "is it not truly delightful to every virtuous mind, to witness such a thorough reformation?"

To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.

I WAS much pleased with a sketch of an excursion to Edinburgh, in-

serted in your Magazine for January; but I regret that the author permitted himself to entertain a superstitious idea of omens. He seems to suppose that the night on which Robert Burns, the Scottish poet, was born, being so stormy as to occasion an accident to the wall of the house, was ominous of the misfortunes which afterwards befel him. Reasoning from the doctrine of cause and effect, I cannot imagine how the misfortunes of Burns could be augured from an accident which was occasioned by the severity of the weather. I admit indeed that similar accidents are more frequently remembered when they happen on memorable eras, and thence many individuals have been inadvertently led into a belief in omens; but surely the writer of the Excursion to Edinburgh cannot suppose that Burns was so important a personage that even the elements had conspired to predict the events of his future life.

Burns was, in common with every human being, the artificer of his own fortunes, as according to his prudent or imprudent conduct depended his "weal or woe," and he undoubtedly caused his misfortunes by his profligacy, for which all his poetic genius could not atone.

The superstitious belief in omens has produced incalculable mischief in the world, by cramping the energy of the soul; and it becomes a duty with every friend to the increase of knowledge, to endeavour to remove the bandage which ignorance binds so firmly on the eyes of the multitude. Let then the writer of the Excursion join in removing the intellectual obscurations of the human mind, instead of assisting to perpetuate ignorance. I recollect when I had an undefined belief in omens; and I am indebted to the following sentiment, with which I met in Dr. Johnson's *Rasselas*, for assisting to

pluck the "baneful weed of superstition" from my mind. "Do not disturb your mind with other hopes and fears than reason may suggest; if you are pleased with prognostics of good, you will be terrified likewise with tokens of evil, and your whole life will be a prey to superstition."

To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.

I FEAR that you and your readers are nearly satiated with discussions on the late synodical transactions. These discussions, however, will be attended with some effects highly beneficial. They will rouse the Presbyterian laity from their present apathy about the interests of their church, and be an additional motive to the members of Synod to conduct themselves in that assembly on the strictest principles of personal integrity, religious liberality, and political independence; knowing that they are not acting in a corner, as heretofore, but that the eyes of the public are upon them.

A very incorrect account of the late Synodical proceedings was given in your August Magazine, by a gentleman who calls himself "An Observer," but who, if I mistake not, was in reality both an actor and a sufferer in the scene which he narrates; and in your Number for December, he has again made his appearance in your columns. Most of Observer's errors have been exposed by two correspondents in your October publication. I will confine myself to a few points which these gentlemen have overlooked, or but slightly commented on. The first point that meets us, is that of Synodical independence.

A writer in your Magazine for July had said, that at the last meeting of Synod, the independence of that

body was rescued from the gripe of a few, who had been the dominant faction for fifteen years before. Observer is very angry with him for saying so; and sturdily asserts, that the Synod had always acted an independent part. To this hardy assertion, your October correspondent, "An Actor," has given an irrefragable reply. He has stated facts, which Observer in his subsequent letter does not even attempt to rebut, farther than by sullenly declaring, that he is of the same opinion still. To Actor's remarks on the subject I refer. I have little to add to them in the way of argument. In truth, it is notorious, that for a long time subsequent to the year 1798, a few members of Synod did exercise over their brethren, not the persuasive influence of eloquence, which Observer affects to suppose was the influence alluded to, but the undue browbeating influence of political intimidation. One gentleman in particular, turning the times to his own advantage, had the address to pass himself on Government as possessing the confidence of the Synod; and on the Synod as possessing the confidence of Government; and thus, by a reciprocal delusion, by the action and re-action of two infringing misconceptions, raised himself into factious importance. By allusions to things personal, by shrugs and frowns, and dark innuendoes, he awed the timid into his train, and kept even the bold at bay. In those days the solemn movement of "the Doctor's" head was fraught with mysterious meaning; every "hear, hear" from him, had weight; and one of his disapproving "aw, aw's" was an argument not easily withstood. I am sensible of the many services which Dr. Black has rendered to the Synod; I know his talents and his energy, and I know the influence which these qualities will always